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Use of newsmen by federal agency is inappropriate

In a world full of danger for individual citizens and for the cause of freedom, there is considerable sentiment for unshackling the Central Intelligence Agency to resume a wider range of covert activities.

But that movement is not being aided by CIA Director Stansfield Turner and President Jimmy Carter, who desire wider CIA latitude but also favor continued use of newspaper correspondents for occasional intelligence assistance.

New York Times Executive Editor A. M. Rosenthal told Turner at an American Society of Newspaper Editors session Thursday in Washington that any such use of a reporter "casts into doubt the ethical and professional position of every American correspondent serving abroad."

He added that it imperils every correspondent's physical safety, since "how do foreigners know that any American correspondent is not one of your

exceptions, particularly in danger areas?"

Another editor told Turner that "some of us would like to have a private session with you and give you a short course in the role of the free press." Turner chose to view it as "any citizen's duty to serve his country if he is in a special position to perform a useful function."

What Director Turner is confusing is the difference between serving in government, on the one hand, and reporting the news so that an enlightened electorate can choose wisely among prospective governmental officials and policies.

A good case can be made for reducing the number of congressional committees to which the CIA must report, from the present eight committees to perhaps two, one in the House and one in the Senate. But before that action is taken the CIA must first rescind its 1977 order and return to the 1974 ban on any use of American newsmen.